

APPEAL TO MEMBER STATES FOR OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The International Ministerial Conference on UNRWA Brussels, 16 November 2021

On the occasion of today's international pledging conference for UNRWA, we appeal to Member States to exercise their duty of oversight by demanding basic accountability from the agency, including to request information from UNRWA as to what if any actions have been taken in wake of the United Nations Watch [report](#), *Beyond The Textbooks: A Report Exposing UNRWA Teachers' Incitement to Antisemitism and Terrorism*, released in August 2021. The report calls for UNRWA to fulfill its promise of "zero tolerance" by dismissing any UNRWA teacher who glorifies antisemitic hatred or terrorism. To date, however, UNRWA has never sent any direct response to UN Watch.

A. Reported UNRWA Suspension of 6 Employees for Inciting Antisemitism

According to recent reports in [Al Jazeera](#) and [The New Arab](#), UNRWA has suspended several employees, placing them on paid leave, pending an investigation into the findings of United Nations Watch's report that documented incitement of antisemitism and terrorism. UNRWA media advisor Adnan Abu Hasna said that employees against whom allegations were proven would be subject to "graduated penalties according to the case, such as warning, dismissal or other administrative procedures," reported [Al Jazeera](#).

The suspensions are welcome. Confusingly, however, no statement was published on the UNRWA website. For UNRWA donors to properly follow-up on this report, they need to request clarifications by UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini of the following:

1. Of the 113 UNRWA teachers and other staff identified in [Annex A](#) of UN Watch's report for glorifying antisemitism or terrorism, which, if any, have been suspended?
2. If indeed only six of the 113 perpetrators have been suspended, Mr. Lazzarini should be asked to identify which of the 107 UNRWA teachers and staff listed in Annex A are still employed by UNRWA. For example, we need to know about:
 - [Ghanem Naim Ghoneim](#), UNRWA teacher who venerates Hitler
 - [Ahmad Fareed Sultan](#), UNRWA teacher who glorifies terrorists
 - [Ibrahim Sabbagh](#), UNRWA teacher who incites terrorist violence
 - [Mudalalah Louz](#), UNRWA school principal who calls to destroy Israel
 - [Mohammad Alsayyed](#), UNRWA head teacher who celebrates abduction and murder of Israelis
 - [Omar Asaad](#), UNRWA employee who glorifies Hitler

- [Hatem Asaad](#), UNRWA employee who praises terrorists
 - [Mohamad Fahed](#), UNRWA employee who endorses murder of Jewish boys
 - [Mohamed Alhallaq](#), UNRWA teacher who glorifies terrorist groups
 - [Tarek Abu Ghazaleh](#), UNRWA employee who celebrates murder of rabbis
 - [Hussam Khattib](#), UNRWA teacher who endorses murder of Israeli civilians
 - [Mohamed Soliman](#), UNRWA teacher who glorifies Hitler and stabbings
3. Why were the six suspended employees placed on paid leave?
 4. What criteria determine whether an UNRWA employee who incites antisemitic hatred or terrorism receives a warning, dismissal or other disciplinary measure?
 5. Given that UNRWA [proclaims](#) “zero tolerance” for “hatred, incitement to violence or discrimination” and a “zero-tolerance policy” for “any deviation from UN principles,” why are teachers found to have publicly incited antisemitic hatred and terrorism not being permanently removed from the classroom?
 6. Does UNRWA have a vetting procedure in place to prevent the hiring of teachers who promote antisemitic hatred, violence or discrimination, and if so what is it?
 7. When earlier this month the UN Human Rights Council president made the unprecedented move of [cutting off](#) UN Watch director Hillel Neuer’s testimony on UNRWA incitement, was this censorship preceded by a request or other communication from UNRWA?

B. Defaming Those Who Uncover UNRWA Misconduct

Member States should firmly reject UNRWA’s contradictory approach toward independent efforts of oversight and accountability, including reports that document racist teachers employed by the agency. On the one hand, in wake of UN Watch’s latest report, UNRWA stated that it “takes each allegation seriously”; “has immediately launched a thorough investigation”; is “concerned” that “some of the posts violate our rules and policies”; and pledged “immediate administrative or disciplinary action” should misconduct be found. Moreover, UNRWA stated that “oversight and accountability of any organization is vital” and that the agency “welcomes future opportunities of assessment.” ([UNRWA statement on United Nations Watch allegations](#), 8/5/2021).

On the other hand, on several occasions—in his own capacity as Commissioner-General—Mr. Lazzarini has resorted to ad hominem attacks on the human rights work of United Nations Watch. On June 30th, for example, he told UNRWA’s donor states that reports documenting UNRWA staff incitement to violence or antisemitism constitute “irrational allegations,” and he characterized this form of oversight and accountability as “political attacks that seek to undermine [UNRWA’s] legitimacy as a way to erode the rights of Palestine refugees”—from which UNRWA needed to be “shielded” by donor states. ([Commissioner-General’s opening statement to UNRWA Advisory Commission](#), 6/30/2021)

Likewise, following UN Watch's latest report documenting incitement to antisemitism and terrorism by 113 UNRWA teachers and other staff, UNRWA's initial response was to lash out and falsely defame this human rights group as "an organization with a deep history of unfounded and politically-driven assertions against the Agency." ([UNRWA statement on United Nations Watch allegations](#), 8/5/2021) Not one example of such "unfounded" or "politically-driven" assertions has ever been provided.

Less than two weeks later, Mr. Lazzarini reported to the UN General Assembly that UNRWA faced "intense politically motivated attacks" which he said "sought to question its mandate, its relevance and the integrity of its staff" primarily through "attacks on the quality of the education that Palestine refugee children receive." ([Commissioner-General's report to the General Assembly](#), 8/18/2021)

In practice, it would seem that UNRWA is refusing to engage with the extensive research and documentation of United Nations Watch which demonstrates UNRWA's failure to apply its purported "zero tolerance" policy toward teachers who incite racism and violence, while at the same time seeking to kill the messenger by maliciously defaming United Nations Watch for providing a minimal form of oversight that UNRWA itself has failed to exercise.

These constitute material issues for the states convened today for the UNRWA international donors conference, and it is incumbent on Mr. Lazzarini to respond.

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